

TBLAK S E R M O N,

PREACHED MAY 6, 1787,

BEFORE THE
MAYOR AND CORPORATION
OF THE
CITY OF ROCHESTER,
AT THE PARISH CHURCH OF STROOD,
FOR THE BENEFIT OF
THE HUMANE SOCIETY.

BY THE REV. JOHN WARD ALLEN, M. A.
MINOR CANON OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ROCHESTER,
AND CURATE OF STROOD.

To which are added, Reflections upon Premature Death and Interment;
together with Directions for the Treatment of Persons apparently
Drowned, as recommended by the Humane Society.



ROCHESTER:

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MDCCLXXXVII.



TO THE WORSHIPFUL
THOMAS STEVENS, ESQ. MAYOR,
AND THE OTHER MEMBERS
OF THE
CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF
ROCHESTER,
THIS SERMON,
(PREACHED AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR PARTICULAR
REQUEST)

IS INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR OBEDIENT

HUMBLE SERVANT,

JOHN WARD ALLEN.

June 7th, 1787.

TO THE WORKS
THOMAS STEWART, ESQ. M.A.
AND THE OTHER MEMBERS

CORPORATION OF THE CITY



(RECEIVED AND RECORDED)

1813

BY ORDER OF THE

SECRETARY

JOHN WARD, ALLEN

June 11 1813

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SERMON, &c.

ST. LUKE, CHAP. X. LATTER PART
OF VERSE 37.

“ ——— Then said Jesus unto him, Go
“ and do thou likewise.”

AS our blessed Saviour has in every thing given us the noblest precepts of virtue, far above all the morals of the wisest heathens, so has he all along adapted them to human nature, and our present state and circumstances in the world. The wisest of those moralists were often too limited and confined

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in their doctrines, and at other times as much too exalted; and gave rules that were not at all fitted to the condition of men: They were not only for wisely moderating and governing, but quite rooting out all passions and affections from their wise men: This was not to make us men with such faculties and powers as God saw fit: This was not to improve, but to destroy, human nature, and set virtue out of its reach; which our Saviour, who knew our frame and utmost capacity, has never done: And as one design of the Christian religion was to soften the manners, and civilize the affections, of mankind; by regulating their passions, and introducing the most extensive benevolence into the world; we find those doctrines most strongly insisted upon in the gospel, which have the greatest probability of accomplishing this good purpose.

WHATEVER contributes to the happiness, peace, and perfection of society; and whatever promotes the general interest of the world, are recommended to our practice, and earnestly enforced as essential to that religion, which makes our duty perfectly consistent with our happiness; and instructs us to seek our own advantage by embracing every opportunity of doing good to others.

BUT that we might not be at a loss for an example, to frame our conduct by, our Saviour, as he does in almost every other case, gives us a particular direction in this matter, by the charitable behaviour of the good Samaritan to the traveller who fell among thieves; presenting us with a very moving picture of human distress. I shall not take up your time, or attention, with repeating the circumstances of the parable, flatter-

ing myself that you are all sufficiently acquainted with this piece of sacred history: but it may not be amiss just to mention, in order to deter you from a similar fault, that those who passed by, and only just looked upon him, were men of his own nation, and who, by a positive injunction of their religion, were obliged to shew him mercy; whilst on the other hand, the generous compassion of the Samaritan, a perfect stranger to him, should recommend itself to our esteem; and be an example to us, to shew that every one in distress, let his country, profession, or faith be what it will, is a proper object of our pity.

THIS instance of benevolence, produced by our Saviour, had such an effect upon the person who had been asking him questions, that though a Jew, (whose brethren thought it the

greatest scandal that could be alledged against them to have any intercourse whatsoever with the Samaritans) he could not help acknowledging, that *" he was his neighbour who had shewed mercy upon him ;"* then said Jesus unto him, *" GO, AND DO THOU LIKEWISE."*

It shall therefore be my business, in the ensuing discourse, to give some directions towards promoting an universal benevolence, in every instance that may come before us; more especially recommending to your notice THAT CHARITY, the interest of which we are now assembled to promote.

WHATSOEVER may tend towards the good and happiness of man; whatsoever may prevent any peril or misfortune he may be exposed to; or deliver him out of any circumstances of adversity,

should be the foundation of our conduct one towards another. To view a copy of the divine goodness in a man of a benevolent disposition, who "*delivereth the poor that crieth, the fatherless, and him that hath no helper,*" who cherisheth the afflicted, and "*maketh the widow's heart to sing for joy,*" (Job, c. 29, v. 12, 13.) gives us a picture, far more lively than words can draw, of that divine love, which equally with the divine spirit, overspreads the whole creation, "*when the ear hears him, then it bleffeth him, and every eye that sees him, gives witness to him,*" (Job, c. 29, v. 11.) and every tongue, with grateful raptures, recounts his beneficence. Though it may be affirmed of every virtue, in the christian catalogue, that it tends to procure love and respect among all serious and good men, it is, however, peculiarly true of charity, which does not

only gain commendation among friends, but makes even a man's "*enemies to be at peace with him.*" (Prov. c. 16. v. 7.)

As every man bears a near relation to the rest of his fellow creatures, we cannot easily consider him under any other point of view, than as he discharges the several obligations that relation lays him under. The tyrant may move our fear, and command our outward adoration, but his utmost force is not able to reach our hearts; and however he may restrain our words, he cannot prevent our thoughts. Riches, and power, strength of wisdom, and eloquence of words, without the principle of humanity accompanying them, are beheld with no satisfaction; while on the contrary, though a man may be mistaken in his measures, or fail in the execution of them, yet if we are satisfied

that benevolence was at the bottom of the design, he is beloved, by those who have this assurance, in the same degree as if he had accomplished his purpose: there is the principle of a good action: we approve the intention: we conceive a love for the man; and only pity the want of power to fulfil, or the ill judged choice of means. This sufficiently atones for other mistakes; and a man shall be sooner pardoned for want of judgment, than for want of charity. As far therefore as human skill and abilities enable us, we are bound by every tie of gratitude to our Redeemer, to embrace all occasions of helping each other.

THE principal design of our blessed Saviour's appearing in the world was to redeem mankind from eternal misery and perdition, to deliver them from those

everlasting torments they were condemned to suffer, and to translate them to an eternity of glory, and happiness. And when we recollect the particular instances of his mercy and compassion; when we call to mind his earnest wishes to serve us, that he sought every opportunity “ *of doing good, that he* “ *went about healing all that were oppressed* “ *with any manner of sickness or disease* “ *among the people;*” (Acts, c. 10, v. 38. Matt. c. 4, v. 23.) we have surely every inducement held up to us, which can possibly excite to an humble imitation of this our benevolent master; and of obeying his injunction, as far as we are able, of “ *going to do likewise.*”

OUR Almighty Creator hath distributed his blessings with an unequal hand, to give occasion for some to exercise their patience, and others their

charity; and hath so ordered the matter, that no man shall be so perfect in this world, but that at one time or other he may be a fit object of another's compassion; nor is any man so low and despicable, but that he may be able to perform some work of mercy to his richer neighbour. In cases therefore of distress, of that particular nature now under consideration, (and no one knows but it may be our own) how should we hold up our hands for the help and assistance of the poorest object in being, to extricate us from it: and shall we hold back our hands, when it is in our power; when an opportunity offers of contributing to the well being of that LAUDABLE ESTABLISHMENT, which does all that is possible towards relieving the distresses of the rich, as well as poor, in similar unhappy situations. But that I may the better dispose you to

promote its charitable purposes, I shall here beg leave to give a brief account of the reasons upon which it was originally instituted.

SOME persons of eminence, both for humanity and professional knowledge, were of opinion, that a mode might be struck out, which would be of use in preserving the lives of many people, apparently drowned; and after the matter had been maturely considered, a method was adopted, and followed with such wonderful success, that it was no sooner held out to the public, as a proper establishment for them to patronize, than men of the first rank, character, and fortune, stepped forth to give it all the assistance possible, by their influence, by their advice, and by their property.

At first, indeed, whilst in its infant state, the directors of it were under the necessity of confining their humane endeavours within a narrow compass, not having it in their power to extend them to a distance: but when the success of their attempts became more known, almost every populous place, bordering upon any river, or nigh upon the sea-coast, where accidents of this nature are most likely to happen, made liberal collections, and had respectable persons appointed in their different neighbourhoods, to whom application might be immediately made, upon every emergency. It has been matter of wonder that the same mode has not long ago been followed by the inhabitants of these places; but as it is never too late to engage in a good cause, thanks be to God, it is at length adopted. It is not indeed possible for

the Society to make regular appointments, and to reward, as they generously do, those who shew the greatest willingness to assist in such cases, without they can occasionally receive proper encouragement from humane individuals, or bodies of people. You are therefore now called upon to enlarge an undertaking truly beneficial to mankind in general; and for the more particular purpose of obtaining speedier help, upon every sad and calamitous occasion, than there is at present to be met with in this neighbourhood.

THOSE who flow in wealth and plenty, cannot, I think, without renouncing the principles of humanity, but feel it incumbent upon them to exercise a more diffusive charity, "*charge them,*" says the Apostle, "*who are rich in this world, that they be ready to give and*

"willing to distribute," for they *"thereby
 lay up for themselves a good foundation
 against the time to come,"* (1. Tim. c. 6.
 v. 17. 18. 19.) *"Do good before you die,
 and according to thine ability stretch out
 thine hands and give,"* says the son of
 Sirach, (Ecclef. c. 14. v. 13.) *"Say not,
 to-morrow thou wilt give if now thou
 have it, for thou knowest not what a
 day will bring forth,"* (Prov. c. 3.
 v. 28.) If we would but reflect a
 moment that a mere trifle is often-
 times capable of relieving men from
 the greatest misery, should we not,
 instead of consuming it upon the gaie-
 ties of life, or the gratification of our
 sensual appetites, more frequently be-
 stow it where it would be of such
 real service? Let us but imagine, that
 the charitable work we are now about,
 may be the means of restoring a
 valuable fellow-creature to life, of re-

covering a useful member to society, and, perhaps, of giving back to a large and numerous family its only comfort and support, and we surely shall not refuse "*setting our seals*" (Cant. c. 8. v. 6.) to this work, nor withhold a fostering hand from so praise-worthy an institution, but "*let every man do as he is disposed in his heart, not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. If thou hast much give plenteously, if thou hast little do thy diligence gladly to give of that little, for so gatherest thou thyself a good reward in the day of necessity;*" (2. Cor. c. 9. v. 7. Tob. c. 4. v. 8. 9.) still distinguishing between a selfish and covetous pretence to the want of power, and a real and actual inability. Whatsoever therefore is in our power, we should endeavour to perform, and make every circumstance attending our

abode in this *earthly tabernacle* turn to the improvement of a future and more durable habitation, “ *not made with hands, eternal in the heavens :*” (2. Cor. c. 5. v. 1.) for our Judge will take any charitable action, as done to himself, saying, “ *in as much as you have done it to one of the least of these, you have done it unto me.*” And because it is the nature and property of God to have mercy and compassion, it necessarily follows, that he must love even a faint resemblance of these his virtues, when he sees them shine forth in his creatures : when he sees they embrace every opportunity of exerting themselves in behalf of the unhappy.

PICTURE to yourselves the dismal scene, where the fond husband, and affectionate parent is brought home, to all appearance deprived of every sense

and power of animation! who can number the tears, or describe the frantic behaviour of the tender partner of his cares? who can hear the lamentations of his now despairing children, without wishing for power to promote every measure that may be thought of for their relief? In such a case let no difficulty discourage us, let not the want of success, in some few instances, prevent the trial of every means calculated for his recovery: for though the torch of life seems quite extinguished, yet a latent spark may still remain, which by proper care, perseverance, and attention, may once more enlighten the whole body. Nay indeed, through the blessing of God upon the method made use of for this purpose, many, who were lately totally insensible to every thing about them, have been restored to their family and friends, and became

again useful and beneficial members of society.

COULD we but behold the number of those whose lives have been thus preserved, when they appear in the congregation of the people, to return their public acknowledgments of praise and thanksgiving to the all merciful God, for his inestimable blessing lately vouchsafed unto them, we could not but feel the most lively sense of gratitude towards the promoters of an undertaking founded upon principles of sound policy, and general philanthropy.

To view so many of almost all ages and sexes, ranks and conditions, with truly grateful hearts, thankful for their preservation: to see again the parents of some, and offspring of others, who have thus unexpectedly, and beyond

all hopes, escaped the snares of death, paying the same tribute to their gracious Benefactor, for his unspeakable mercies; must be such a scene of delight, to a sensible and compassionate heart, that no words are capable of expressing: and no other consideration whatever, but that of relieving a fellow creature from a similar distress, can possibly equal. How sweet must be our sleep if we have, in any shape, contributed towards such a scheme of charity? The pleasure indeed must be unutterable. Then it is that we taste, in all its purity, that deep and well founded happiness, which humane minds are alone capable of tasting. Such then are the blessed effects that this happily contrived and well digested institution will produce: and therefore every compassionate man, every friend to society, and every good Christian, will, I dare say, unani-

mously agree in promoting so extensive and universal a benefit.

No institution can be better calculated for the advantage of this neighbourhood than the one under consideration, and which, I trust, we are now determined to encourage. "*You who go down to the sea in ships, and occupy your business in great waters,*" (Psal. c. 107, v. 23.) run greater hazard of standing in need of this benefit, than others, whose line of life does not so constantly lead them into so much danger. How many widows, how many orphans, must have been left in the most desolate condition, had it not been for the impartial and generous charity which now solicits your protection?

THE success with which God hath so remarkably blessed it, carries undoubted

and genuine proofs of its wonderful utility: Many instances have indeed occurred in distant parts, and far from our own observation; but some have fallen out nearer home, nay indeed at our very doors. One in particular, some few years past, "*whom the waters had overwhelmed, and the stream had seemingly gone over his soul,*" (Psal. c. 124. v. 3.) is sufficient to shew that had it not been for the rules laid down by this Society, a youth would have unfortunately been lost; but by an extraordinary perseverance therein, he was restored to life; to his despairing and affectionate parents. Another likewise of the same kind has just happened; and, though not so striking as the former, yet will it exhibit a fresh reason for doing what we can towards preserving for the present, and generations yet unborn, the beneficial consequences of this useful plan.

It would indeed be ungenerous in the highest degree to expect that this Charity should handsomely reward (as in the cases just mentioned it has done) the exertions of individuals, without affording something ourselves towards the continuance of its good effects. It may indeed be asserted that every man of humanity will, without having "*any respect to the recompence of reward,*" (Heb. c. 11. v. 26.) as far as he is able, endeavour to relieve his brethren according to their several necessities, but it unfortunately often happens that they do not know how to proceed in the best manner upon every case that may come before them. Is it not our business then to enlarge the powers of mankind as much as possible? And from whence, in the present case, can it be so well done as by procuring from the original foundation a knowledge of

that method practised with such amazing success? To prevent also, as much as possible, any hard-heartedness among people who think themselves justified in preferring their own interest to that of others, (especially when it can be done without running the risque of being censured by the world,) bounties are held forth to those who shall first readily receive into their houses any person who may be a fit object for a trial of their humane endeavours; and to others also who shall continue steadfast in their good purposes unto the end.

THIS is acting, though in a more confined degree, according to the practice of our blessed Saviour set forth to us in the Gospel; who, in order to engage men to be obedient to his wishes, promises a crown and a kingdom of glory, rewards and pleasures for

evermore: Upon the same principle, proper encouragement is here given, in order to bring others forward to do their duty, and to strengthen those impressions of humanity, which, though nature has implanted in almost every man, yet, through some one corruption or other, does in many cases often want secondary causes to bring them into action. The method practised by the Humane Society for the purpose of recovering people under suffocation from drowning, or from other causes, is not indeed universally known; but when the knowledge of it becomes more general, as it will in these places, by the means we are now pursuing, (should they meet with proper encouragement,) the chance of preserving life in many cases, under the blessing of God, will be much increased.

It has hitherto been a rule with me, when I have been recommending a charitable disposition to your notice, to speak only in general terms, and not point at any specific mode of doing good; leaving it wholly to yourselves to find out fit and proper opportunities for exercising this most excellent gift; the very *bond of peace*, and of all virtues: but I feel myself justified in departing from that rule at present; nay, I feel myself happy in bringing forward to your particular attention that noble Institution, whose assistance may be hereafter wanted by many in these places: perhaps ourselves, our relations, or our friends, may be the unfortunate objects upon whom it may one time or other have the sad occasion of exercising its benevolent exertions.

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LET us not then, in this matter, depend upon the bounty and good will of others, but be our own benefactors; and rest upon our own virtue. Let us "*give alms of our goods, and not turn our face from any poor man,*" from any charitable prospect that may be brought before us, "*and then the face of the Lord will not be turned from us.*" (Tob. c. 4. v. 7.) And may the same amiable spirit which first gave effect to this laudable institution, still reign in our hearts; and be productive of happiness, to our fellow creatures, both now and for ever.

Amen.

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T H E E N D.